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HPCC club and Valentin Albillo

Message #1 Posted by [Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz](#) on 24 July 2007, 12:29 a.m.

This posting is about Valentin Albillo's membership agreement with the HPCC HP calculator club, and criticisms of it. Some people have said this is a subject for the HPCC club only, not for discussion on the MoHPC Forum. Others have suggested they will leave the club because the club has made no official posting here. As so much has been written on this Forum, and because Valentin asked for it, here is a statement on behalf of the club. If you are not interested in goings-on at HP calculator clubs, feel free to skip the rest :-)

* Valentin Albillo does NOT have a free membership of the club. That is Valentin's understanding of the arrangement, and that of most of the club Committee. After paying for membership in the usual way for 4 years, he offered to make payment instead by writing a guaranteed and regular set of articles for our journal, Datafile. The Editor liked the idea, the club Committee accepted it, the Annual General Meeting in 2005 approved the agreement, the AGM in 2006 confirmed it, and it's been running satisfactorily for two years and is now well into its third. Not everyone agreed, but this was an officially made agreement that Valentin paid by providing articles regularly, not a free membership.

* An arrangement like this, where a regular supply of quality articles is guaranteed, is very valuable to an editor. It is like the difference between a journalist with a contract to provide a weekly newspaper column and bloggers who post when and what they like. The blogs might or might not be more interesting than the column, but they do not provide the guarantee an editor needs that pages will be filled in every issue. The HPCC Editor offered to make similar agreements with other members who could satisfy the Editor and the Committee that they would provide a regular supply of substantial articles of interest to HPCC members.

* Two members of HPCC opposed this agreement, and voted against it at the AGMs, because the club works on the basis that all members pay money for their membership. As in most clubs, it would be considered wrong for the Treasurer or the Editor, for example, to get their membership in exchange for the work they do. The Committee recognized this concern, but considered Valentin's offer to be for the good of the club and voted to accept it.

* Two other members have expressed some opposition, and one of them has recently suggested that the agreement is contrary to the club constitution. This objection has been made only after the agreement had been working successfully for more than two years. The Committee believes that the constitution allows it to make such special arrangements for the good of the club, but the question will be discussed at the next AGM, and appropriate changes will be made to the constitution if the AGM so decides.

* The members who are opposed to the agreement have every right to continue in their personal opposition to it, but I ask them not to publicly misrepresent the position, and not to be rude to Valentin on this Forum, nor anywhere else for that matter.

* Until the situation is discussed at the AGM, the Editor has withdrawn the offer of similar agreements. Further, to avoid any more arguments, Valentin has now paid with money for his membership for the rest of the current year. Despite this, he will hold to his agreement with the club and will continue to write for Datafile – he has already offered a set of articles about the new HP35s.

Apologies for the length of the above, but I hope it clarifies matters.

Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz on behalf of the HPCC club Committee

Re: HPCC club and Valentin Albillo

*Message #2 Posted by **Geir Isene** on 24 July 2007, 3:27 a.m.,
in response to message #1 by Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz*

Would everyone be satisfied if Valentin paid his membership fee as usual and the club paid him the exact same money back for the guaranteed contributions? (on the chance that the club's constitution allows for paying contributors).

Re: HPCC club and Valentin Albillo

*Message #3 Posted by **Walter B** on 24 July 2007, 4:32 a.m.,
in response to message #2 by Geir Isene*

IMHO this would make a simple agreement more complicated, and only feed the banks. Within the framework set by the HPCC constitution, majority rules. As Wlodek explained very well, the agreement was accepted regularly. This isn't mathematics, it's democracy. Hopefully, every member shall be able to accept this.

Just my 0,02 Euros.

Re: HPCC club and Valentin Albillo

*Message #4 Posted by **Howard Owen** on 24 July 2007, 4:00 a.m.,
in response to message #1 by Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz*

Quote:

Apologies for the length of the above, but I hope it clarifies matters.

Thank you for clearing that up. And *thank* you for rescuing Datafile's relationship with Valentin. I believe that is the right outcome for Datafile and the HPCC membership. I'm looking forward to issues containing more great articles, both from Valentin, Gene and others.

Thank you, once again.

Regards,
Howard

Re: HPCC club and Valentin Albillo

*Message #5 Posted by **Wayne Brown** on 24 July 2007, 10:47 a.m.,
in response to message #1 by Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz*

Thank you very much for explaining it all so clearly. It seems a fair and equitable arrangement to me, and I would have no objection to it continuing for as long as Valentin and the Committee wish it. In any case, my chief concerns (the apparent secrecy surrounding this issue, and the lack of an official public statement that would put to rest the rumors) have been satisfied and I no longer have any hesitation about renewing my membership next year.

Re: HPCC club and Valentin Albillo

*Message #6 Posted by **Bruce Bergman** on 24 July 2007, 1:45 p.m.,
in response to message #1 by Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz*

It's interesting to read some of the thought process and history from the club perspective, so thanks for that.

This whole thing got into the public eye in a weird way, so I'm not sure any of us even have the "right" to comment on any of this. Especially me, because I am not an HPCC member (but would really like to be, BTW). The workings of this really don't involve us.

However. ;-) I might offer an opinion or two, just to get on a soapbox for a second. Please take it with a grain of salt. ;-)

I personally think this situation was WAY too political. Maybe that's because of the make up of the group, or it being in the UK or whatever, but really guys, this is a ****CLUB****. You're not running a company, or leading the take over of a country, you don't have tens of thousands of members, it's not rocket science, etc. You basically have a group of folks who are enthusiastic about calculators. It doesn't HAVE to be this hard. In fact, it shouldn't be hard at all.

Everything that happened, according to Wlodek's recap, is wonderfully normal and appropriate. It appears just a few dissenters caused all the ruckus, and that's...unfortunate.

My humble opinion probably means nothing to anyone here, but I believe I have relevant background, both having been in the publishing industry as a columnist and editor, being involved with HP calcs for 30 years, and also in having helped start, govern, run and manage many non-profit organizations and clubs for over 15

years. In all that time, I've never seen something as small and petty as this get so many folks riled, and cause such lengths of procedure and process to be expended. It boggles the mind.

A technical journal like this is a heart and soul of a user community, and it stands to reason that getting quality content is one of the most important considerations. Exchange for (something else) is accepted, normal and highly ethical. In fact, I'd go so far as to say it is "necessary". I support that idea.

Dr. Laura has a really great perspective on disagreements like this. I wish more people took this advice. Simply said "just be polite".

Good luck to Wlodek (who I respect immensely), Valentin (who writes great stuff) and HPCC (who needs to send me a membership application). :-)

thanks, bruce

Edited: 24 July 2007, 1:52 p.m.

Re: HPCC club and Valentin Albillo

*Message #7 Posted by [John Cadick](#) on 24 July 2007, 3:20 p.m.,
in response to message #6 by Bruce Bergman*

Hi Bruce:

The membership form is found at [HPCC Membership](#).

John

Re: HPCC club and Valentin Albillo - thanks

*Message #8 Posted by [Wlodek Mier-Jedrzejowicz](#) on 25 July 2007, 10:48 p.m.,
in response to message #7 by John Cadick*

Many thanks to all who responded on this subject for your very positive reactions. My thanks as well to HPCC's journal Editor, Bruce Horrocks and to everyone in our club Committee who had to go through the experience. Thanks to Dave for providing this Forum, and special thanks to Valentin Albillo, for his enthusiasm, for his articles, and for his support of HPCC.

Politics are indeed unavoidable once a group sets out to achieve more than just meeting and talking. Groups can have written rules, unwritten rules, or a mixture - yet there will always be circumstances that are not foreseen by the rules. When that happens, some people will think the group is best served by sticking rigidly to the existing rules, while others will prefer a loose interpretation for the perceived good of the group. It usually takes some time to find out who was right in any particular case! Here we wanted to be circumspect, but we finally did decide to post a statement - and to discuss the matter again at the next Annual General Meeting of the club. Till then, I trust the matter is sorted out and I look forward to Valentin's coming articles.

Thanks again, Wlodek

"Politics" and Calculators

Message #9 Posted by **Howard Owen** on 24 July 2007, 7:14 p.m.,
in response to message #6 by Bruce Bergman

I don't want to rake the coals of this particular episode, but I felt I needed to respond to some of the general points you made. Please be assured that I don't undertake this, nor should it be interpreted as a personal attack. It's the ideas I want to discuss.

- Firstly, becoming "political" is what organizations with more than two members do unconsciously, and appropriately. If you want to avoid politics, don't write a charter or bylaws or anything like that. Politics is essential to those processes. Do you want to make a decision at a group level? Dust off the politics. Does a strong leader make the decision without consulting anyone? That's autocracy. Does the group informally decide? That's one form of democracy. Politics is simply unavoidable.
- You note that dissenters were the cause of this particular imbroglio. I'm not entirely sure about that. But that's the way people tend to be in groups greater than two in number anyway. Should you suppress the natural tendency in people to disagree, and to get annoyed behind those disagreements? I submit that it's not possible to do that anywhere over the 50% level in an organization that isn't tightly restricted to a single code of behavior and discourse. And even there, in military organizations for example, you *still* have dissent.
- You suggest that the common enthusiasm for calculators ought to be enough to avoid unpleasantness. As a thought experiment, imagine that there are two auto enthusiasts who happen to like the same cars. However, each one belongs to a different church, has different political affiliations, comes from a different corner of the world, speaks a different language, and so forth. Is it likely these two will agree on everything because of their shared interest in automobiles? It's not likely. And an organization made up of people who all share one another's opinions on everything strikes me as uninteresting, at best.

So I wouldn't disparage the political process in this case. After all, hostile viewpoints that resulted in significant harm to the community in question were reconciled by a political process. I count that as a very good thing.

Regards,
Howard

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